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EDMONTON • WEEKEND, JANUARY 23-25, 2009 metro

Celebrity Buzz



Police look into Travolta extortion

pg 22

Cops say there's a link in two deaths

CRIME Two people who were gunned down in two neighbourhoods in the city's southwest overnight Wednesday knew each other though a drug connection, city cops said Thursday.

Cody Lee Johnson, 29, was identified as the city's first homicide victim of the year after he was found in an Escalade that crashed into a house near 156 Street and 77 Avenue late Tuesday night.

Fernando Alberto Vasquez, 24, was found dead in the middle of a road in McAllister Loop on Wednesday morning, about 45 minutes after Johnson's death. Detectives believe both cases are linked, but no arrests have been made.

The investigations continue, police said.

METRO EDMONTON

The 81st Annual
Academy Awards

• Button, Slumdog lead way, page 14
• Quotes, page 14
• Rick McGinnis, page 20

Music pg 19

Alan Cross' Sound Check

Sports pg 12

Two girls, one dream



Sgt. Chad Tawfik, left, and Const. Tony Golab display new colours after the EPS Presentation of Colours ceremony at city hall on Thursday morning. The colours honour the memory of police officers who have been killed in the line of duty. **Story, pg 4**

EPS **True colours**

BEN LEMPHERS FOR METRO EDMONTON

Lack of appeal upsets parents

VICTORIA HANDYSIDES
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COURTS Josh Hunt's bereaved parents say the decision not to appeal his killer's acquittal is like watching their son lay motionless in a hospital bed all over again.

"It's very, very difficult," said Gary Hunt. "It's like Josh died again, to us."

Following a thorough review of the Dec. 17 decision, the Crown decided it would not appeal the ruling that determined a then-teenage boy killed the 16-year-old Hunt in self-defence.

In a written decision, Justice Terry Clackson stated that the accused, who cannot be named, lawfully used the knife against Hunt, to "prevent an assault or the repetition of it." Hunt and another teen were in an altercation with the accused in the accused's home, following a party on Oct. 14, 2006.

Though Gary and Patricia Hunt wrote a letter to Premier Ed Stelmach and pleaded with the Crown to appeal, the decision will stand.

"We're very shocked. It's a sad day, not just for us, but for all Canadians," Gary Hunt said, expressing his disappointment in the justice system.

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A tale of two cities

Calgary and Edmonton seem to differ on violent crimes

KRISTA SYLVESTER
Metro Canada

Gang problems

Both crime experts agree the gang problems — with Calgary's surging now and Ed-

monton's increasing — are on the forefront of the cities' crime trends.

A man pretending to be a woman on the Internet allegedly lures a middle-aged man to his garage before killing him, imitating a screenplay he wrote.

If it sounds like the scene from a movie, that's because it practically is. But this is what allegedly happened in Edmonton when 29-year-old Mark Twitchell was charged in the disappearance and murder of a man police say he lured to his garage to kill.

While both cities boast their share of crime, Cal-

gary tends to have a lot of shootings, but Edmonton has had quite a few headline-stealing ones — like Twitchell and Thomas Svekla, the man who was found guilty of killing two prostitutes.

Edmonton criminologist Bill Pitt acknowledges a mixture of bizarre incidents last year, but insists even in Edmonton, they are unusual.

"The film director was a case of life imitating art

imitating life, but those types are so statistically rare," Pitt said.

But what about the series of missing prostitutes found dead and the four men charged with cutting a man into pieces in a bloody apartment?

"People cutting up bodies, well that happens in every city everywhere and Calgary is no different. These guys just got sloppy and got caught," Pitt added. "Calgary has a lot of

missing people who just haven't been found."

Cathy Prowse, a University of Calgary crime expert, said one possible reason for the difference in the types of murders between the two cities could be that Edmonton has more transients.

"I'm not suggesting transient people commit the crimes, but having more transients means people can go missing and people won't notice right away," Prowse said.

And Pitt agreed, adding, "Calgary has more white-collar, head-office type, and Edmonton has more blue-collar, labour-working type."

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A 25-year-old woman is dead following a collision on Highway 21 on Thursday morning. The 2007 Nissan Versa the victim was driving crossed the centre line, and collided with a northbound Lexus and a Chevrolet pickup truck. The name of the victim was not released. **METRO EDMONTON**

Local



EPCOR to buy treatment plant

The city will go ahead with plans to sell its Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant to EPCOR after a 7-6 vote Wednesday night. The city will be selling the plant to EPCOR for about \$190 million that will be collected over the next 10 years, including a \$75-million transfer fee and dividend payments.

METRO EDMONTON

Third man charged in Nov. murder

HOMICIDE After spitting on the ground in Calgary on Wednesday, a man found himself in cuffs, slapped with a second-degree murder charge in relation to the death of an Edmonton man.

Joseph Sunchild Lagrelle, 23, is the third person to be arrested in connection with the death of 22-year-old Quentin L'hirondelle.

L'hirondelle was stabbed to death at a downtown house party on Nov. 8.

A 22-year-old man and a 21-year-old man were also charged following the homicide. **METRO EDMONTON**



Video Peter Lougheed takes recent Alberta governments to task at metronews.ca/canada

Video Log Driver's Waltz among short films National Film Board of Canada makes available online at metronews.ca/canada

Video Vancouver Taser inquiry hears from victim's mother at metronews.ca/canada



Youth smoking down, but not enough: Group

Get rid of flavoured cigarettes, raise taxes, ASH says

KRISTA SYLVESTER
Metro Canada



Despite smoking rates hitting an all-time low in Albertans over 15 years old, there is still concern over youth smoking, according to a provincial anti-smoking organization.

A national study released by Health Canada on Monday showed that 19 per cent of Albertans over 15 were smokers during the first half of 2008, marking the first time statistics in Alberta reached under 20 per cent.

But Action on Smoking and Health Calgary spokesperson Robyn Hauck said they are still concerned about the number of teens smoking.

"Smoking rates among Alberta teens remain disturbingly high despite the gains that have been made in reducing tobacco use among adults," said Hauck,

ROBIN KUNISKI/FOR METRO CANADA



Smoking is at an all-time low in people aged 15 and up, but some anti-smoking groups say they're still concerned with the number of teens lighting up.

calling for another tax hike on smokes.

According to 2007 Health Canada statistics, 20 per cent of Alberta teens 15 to 19 were current smokers.

ASH Edmonton spokesperson Karlee Stevens called for an outright ban on flavoured cigarettes to drastically reduce that number.

"They are absolutely geared towards youth because of the taste and pack-

Comparisons

- Alberta's smoking rate is slightly higher than the national rate of 18 per cent for Canadians aged 15 years and over.

Less than one in five Albertans are current smokers, compared to one in three 20 years ago, according to the ASH.

aging. They look like lip gloss and youth are more prone to try them and get hooked," she added.

But 15-year-old Michelle, of Calgary, agrees.

"I didn't even start smoking until just a year ago. I always said I never would, but I caved in to peer pressure," the teen said, who didn't want to use her last name.



Bryce Gruwell, a cast member, leads young Edmonton skaters.

High School Musical on ice

SHOWTIME Though they had to skip school to do it, a few area kids got the thrill of a lifetime yesterday morning, taking to the ice with stars of their favourite Disney production.

The cast of High School Musical: The Ice Tour glided on the ice at West Edmonton Mall's Ice Palace with mini-figure skaters, showing them the tricks of the trade.

Nine-year-old Madison Moore could barely sit still while waiting for her turn to skate with the stars.

"I really like their songs and skating is really fun," she said.

Star of the show, 19-year-old Brittany Heath, said: "Skating has always been my passion. This job doesn't feel like a real job."

The show runs this weekend at Rexall Place. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster from \$20 to \$55.

VICTORIA HANDSIDES
/METRO EDMONTON

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Cancel Indy blank cheques, says CTF

MONEY Taxpayers shouldn't be saddled with a \$5.3 million debt that was left by last summer's Rexall Indy race, says the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Scott Hennig, an Alberta director with the federation, says the city should cancel the "blank cheques" it gives to Northlands and the Indy Racing League to cover their losses for the next two years.

"IRL and their drivers rake in millions upon millions of dollars a year. If their race loses money, perhaps IRL or their drivers should be covering the losses, not taxpayers," said Hennig in a statement.

METRO EDMONTON

EPS unveils new colours

JEFF CUMMINGS
jeff.cummings@metronews.ca

Edmonton's police service unveiled its new colours and crest at city hall Thursday — colours that honour those officers who paid the ultimate sacrifice while fighting crime.

In a police ceremony in front of roughly 80 politicians, police officers, and the public, officers unfurled the new flag — referred to as colours — in front of the crowd that was later blessed by Chaplain Kurt Schmidlin and presented to Lt.-Gov. Norman Kwong.

The new colours that

will be worn by every police officer in the service will be dark blue with embroidered wild roses and maple leaves inside a gold fringe.

Seven names of fallen officers who have died in the line of duty since 1918 are embroidered around the new crest of the Edmonton Police Service with the new motto, "Integrity, Courage, Community," in the new colours that reflects Edmonton's history.

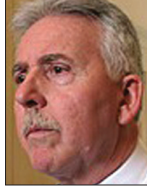
The police service has never had its colours changed to pay tribute to fallen officers until now, something that was 12

years in the making, said Police Chief Mike Boyd.

"It is a very historical and very significant day in the history of our police service," said Boyd. "This is important for our police service."

The colours were designed and approved by the Canadian Heraldic Authority in 2004 and it had to be granted approval by Queen Elizabeth II.

"We have a lot of new recruits and we want them to join in on those traditions and to carry on the traditions of the Edmonton Police Service," Boyd said about the colours.



Mike Boyd



Dez Melenka is affectionately mauled by two female terrier-mix puppies, Joe and Shanna. The puppies were flown from Hay River, N.W.T., to Edmonton two nights ago, and will be available for adoption in a week.

Adoptable puppies flown in from Hay River, N.W.T.

VICTORIA HANDYSIDES
victoria.handysides@metronews.ca

SPCA Joe, a scruffy mixed-breed puppy, would have surely frozen to death with her brothers and sisters under a porch, were she not rescued in the nick of time.

She and two other homeless puppies were flown to Edmonton in search of new homes, as their birthplace of Hay River, NWT, is overrun with orphaned dogs and not enough places to put them.

"They were found freezing and starving to death, and were they not found, they would have died," said Edmonton Humane Society spokeswoman Shawna Randolph.

Because the small, northern community does

not have its own animal shelter, orphaned dogs are placed with foster families. Bylaws prevent surrogate parents from housing more than two at a time, and few families are willing to foster as it is.

Four-month-old suspected siblings Joe and Shanna, along with two-month-old Faith, a Rottweiler-Husky mix, were flown to Edmonton where there is a little more room at the inn.

All expenses for the trip were covered by the Hay River SPCA.

Though they arrived at the shelter two nights ago, the puppies won't be ready for adoption for another week, so that they can first be spayed and vaccinated.

Currently, the shelter is housing around two dozen adoptable dogs.

What you need to know about

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- Employers and benefit administrators who collect and/or remit premiums on behalf of their employees.
- New Albertans who have registered and were eligible for Alberta Health Care Insurance in 2008.

Alberta Health and Wellness would like to thank Albertans who have paid 2008 premiums and remind those yet to pay their bill in full, that Alberta Health and Wellness will continue to issue statements on accounts with outstanding premiums. As well, those paying Alberta Blue Cross Non-Group insurance premiums, or other supplemental health premiums, will continue to pay in 2009 as those premiums remain in effect.

For more information visit www.health.alberta.ca or call toll-free 310-0000 then dial 780-427-1432. In Edmonton, call 780-427-1432.



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Trees in western North America are dying twice as quickly as they did 30 years ago, with rising average temperatures almost certainly to blame, researchers reported Thursday. These thinner and weaker forests will become more vulnerable to wildfires and may soak up less carbon dioxide, in turn speeding up global warming, they said. **REUTERS**

Canada

Blowin' in the wind

The government of Ontario was expected to announce Friday another \$1.3-billion worth of renewable-energy projects, most of it wind, as part of its ongoing effort to green up the province's power mix, Torstar News Service has learned. Ontario expects to have 1,200 megawatts of wind power capacity in operation this summer.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Stem cells **Waiting for a match**



Other Half co-chairs Susan Go, left, and Amy Tam get the word out about stem cell donations Thursday in Toronto. People of Chinese descent are under-represented in the stem-cell donor pool to the point that the chance of finding a match is less than 10 per cent.

Tories plan to go \$64B in red

Canada will post \$64 billion in deficits over the next two fiscal years to stimulate a flagging economy, but it will return to surplus in five years, a senior government official said Thursday.

The deficits will mark an end to 12 straight years of surpluses for Canada, which had been the only member of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations still in the black.

The aide said Ottawa would run a deficit of \$30 billion in the following fiscal year, starting April 1, 2010, and deficits would keep getting smaller thereafter. Most of the stimulus

One surplus left

The official said government revenues — including corporate and personal taxes — have been declining with the

economic slowdown but, as far as he knew, the budget for the current fiscal year would remain in surplus.

spending would be short-term so as to prevent a permanent deficit from emerging, he said.

The aide was briefing reporters ahead of the minority Conservative government's budget, which it will deliver Tuesday.

In the campaign ahead of the Oct. 14 election, Harper had said a deficit could be

avoided, but as the global economy worsened he agreed at a summit in Washington the next month to join in concerted international stimulus efforts.

The figure of \$34 billion represents roughly two per cent of the value of the Canadian economy.

REUTERS

Hormone therapy fears baseless: MDs

HEALTH Hormone therapy is a safe and viable option for some Canadian women who want relief from hot flashes, night sweats and other severe symptoms of menopause, a panel of experts said Thursday.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada said new research has found short-term use of hormone therapy by women early in menopause is most effective and has "little appreciable effect on risk."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

News in brief

SASKATCHEWAN A second man has been charged in connection with a shooting that injured a six-year-old girl in Saskatoon last week, CBC News Online reports. The girl is listed in stable condition.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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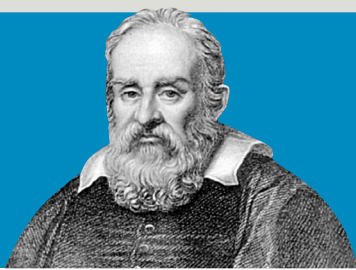
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World



Looking through Galileo's eyes

Italian and British scientists want to exhume the body of 16th century astronomer Galileo for DNA tests to determine if his severe vision problems may have affected some of his findings. "If we knew exactly what was wrong with his eyes, we could use computer models to recreate what he saw in his telescope," said Paolo Galluzzi, director of the Museum of History and Science in Florence, the city where Galileo is buried. **REUTERS**

U.S. House panel approves \$304B stimulus

FUNDING A House panel approved Thursday a \$304-billion US package of business and individual tax breaks and aid to the unemployed that is to be part of the huge \$825 billion economic stimulus sought by U.S. President Barack Obama.

The tax writing House Ways and Means Committee approved the package,

which provides \$275 billion in tax breaks, on a largely party-line vote.

The package includes a temporary refundable tax credit for workers, up to \$500 per individual and \$1,000 per couple. It also includes tax incentives for renewable energy and allows builders and other companies to write off current losses against five pre-

vious tax years. Currently businesses can write off losses against two previous years. The bill also provides money to help the unemployed keep health insurance coverage.

The package will be combined with other elements of the proposed stimulus, which the House is expected to vote on next week. **REUTERS**

News in brief

CHURCH Pope Benedict will soon lift the excommunication on four traditionalist bishops, in his latest attempt to heal a 20-year-old schism in the Roman Catholic Church, an Italian paper said Thursday. In 1998, the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre illegally consecrat-

ed four bishops without permission from the late Pope John Paul, resulting in self-imposed excommunication.

POLITICS Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice has signed on with the William Morris Agency, which will rep-

resent her for books and lecture appearances. The deal includes representation for philanthropic initiatives, as well as business initiatives in media, sports and communications, an agency representative said Thursday. **REUTERS**

Obama focuses on tarnished U.S. image



U.S. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chat Thursday after remarks at the State Department in Washington, D.C.

U.S. President Barack Obama ordered Thursday the closing of Guantanamo prison and named foreign policy troubleshooters for the Middle East and Iran as he moves to repair America's tarnished image.

Obama set a one-year deadline for shutting Guantanamo and barred harsh treatment of terrorism suspects held there.

The prison in Cuba — where prisoners have been detained for years without charges, some subjected what human rights groups say amounted to torture — had damaged America's moral standing.

Obama waded further into his foreign policy plans by paying a visit to the State Department to welcome Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

His foreign policy goals include pursuing broader

Iraq prepared

• Iraq's military is "prepared for the worst" if Obama orders a swift withdrawal of U.S. troops, its defence minister said.

engagement overseas than the Bush administration, which was criticized for go-it-alone "cowboy diplomacy, and refocusing the fight against terrorism away from the Iraq war toward Afghanistan.

He yesterday named George Mitchell, a former senator, as an envoy who will try to jump-start Arab-Israeli peace talks. He also tapped former ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and related issues. **REUTERS**

Clinton vows new era in diplomacy

FOREIGN POLICY Hillary Clinton took the helm at the State Department Thursday, promising a new era in U.S. diplomacy, but tough times ahead.

About 1,000 employees cheered when Clinton arrived for her first full day as secretary of state.

"I will do all that I can working with you to make it abundantly clear that robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing America's future," Clinton said.

Clinton won Senate approval Wednesday despite concerns about the fundraising activities of her husband, former president Bill Clinton. **REUTERS**

UN launches Gaza relief efforts

MIDDLE EAST The UN is launching a major aid effort to help tens of thousands of children in the aftermath of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, a top aid official said Thursday.

"We are scaling up our humanitarian support and looking to expand significantly our psychosocial support. The situation is very dire," said Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"We are scaling up our humanitarian support ... The situation is very dire."

Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF

Kaag said children, who form the majority of the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, bore the brunt of the onslaught.

More than 400 children were among the 1,314 Palestinians killed and more than 1,800 children were injured, many suffer-

ing amputations or severe burns.

UNICEF aims to offer mass counselling and first aid. UN technical teams are aiming to open schools by mid-February and to repair quickly key water supply systems damaged by the bombing. **REUTERS**

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48 whales die in beaching in Tasmania

A pod of 50 sperm whales beached themselves on Australia's southern island state of Tasmania overnight Thursday, but only two survived. **REUTERS**

world 9

China **A mother's grief**

A woman, whose child died from drinking tainted milk, holds a sign reading "Give me back my child" outside Shijiazhuang intermediate people's court on Thursday. Two men were sentenced to death for their role in the scandal that killed six children, while the woman most widely blamed for the tragedy got life in jail.

Disasters cost China \$110B

Natural disasters caused nearly \$110 billion US of damage in China last year, a warning to other emerging economies ill-prepared for potential hazards, the United Nations said on Thursday.

A May earthquake in Sichuan and extreme weather made China the most disaster-affected country in economic terms in 2008, said the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

The UN body said the world economy suffered a \$181 billion blow from naturally-occurring events such as floods, storms, volcanic eruptions, wildfires and droughts in 2008. Much of the devastation was avoidable, said ISDR Director Salvano Briceno.

"These losses could have been substantially reduced if buildings in China, particularly schools and hospitals, had been built to be more earthquake-resistant," he said.

Though disasters were less frequent than in past

Most worldwide

• China also had the highest number of disasters last year, with 26 recorded. The Philippines was next with 20, followed by the United States with 19, Indonesia with 16, and Vietnam and India with 10 each.

years, the Sichuan quake and Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar in May made 2008 the most deadly since 2004, when an Indian Ocean tsunami devastated Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.

A total of 235,816 people were killed by disasters in 2008, compared with 16,871 the year before. The costs were more than double the 2007 damages of \$75 billion.

The centre which compiled the data released by the ISDR said China's costs should serve as a lesson to India, Iran, Turkey, and other middle-income nations which are building infrastructure rapidly. **REUTERS**

Obama's top-spy choice sees opportunity in Iran, Middle East

SECURITY U.S. intelligence agencies should seek ways of working with Islamic leaders and countries such as Iran on issues of mutual interest, President Barack Obama's choice for spy chief said Thursday.

Retired adm. Dennis Blair also urged a break with the Bush administration intelligence policies in a Senate hearing for his nomination as director of national intelligence. This includes applying standards for humane treatment of terrorism suspects. **REUTERS**

Russia, Georgia must probe war crimes: Group

CONFLICT A leading rights watchdog urged Russia and Georgia on Thursday to investigate indiscriminate attacks and human rights violations, including possible war crimes, committed during their war last year.

Human Rights Watch released a report documenting attacks on civilians in the five-day conflict when Russia repelled a Georgian assault on South Ossetia. **REUTERS**

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Comment & Views

Comment

Ringling the cellphone alarm

New study suggests increased brain tumour risk for kids

Marketplace

Wendy Mesley

It's the dream toy of today's kids. Something they can use to play games. Text best friends. Download the latest Jonas Brothers ringtone. And call mom. That's right, kids today want cellphones. A survey we did of 1,000 Canadian tweens shows that almost half of them already have a cellphone.

Parents like the idea, too. Companies are keen to market cellphones as a security tool, a way to stay on top of children's whereabouts. Some even come with GPS tracking.

Today's kids are set to become the longest-term users of cellphones, starting at younger ages than ever before. Great for the phone business, but some scientists are ringing a cautionary

alarm bell.

I've been following the debate about cellphone safety for 15 years. During that time, there have been two huge studies that were supposed to get to the bottom of the question, "Can cellphone radiation cause brain cancer?" The first study was inconclusive, and largely funded by the companies that make phones. I've reported on the fact that most of the research money was spent on public relations, not science, allowing companies to stand behind a wall of inconclusive studies showing phones are safe.

But now, there are cracks in that wall. Results from a second big study are trickling out, and some data suggests there is an increased

risk of brain tumours. Some scientists say that this is cause for concern. Others say the data is flawed.

This isn't fringe science. The new data comes from a World Health Organization study. It's the first of its kind to take a look at what happens when people use cellphones over a long period. The final report was due three years ago, but it still hasn't been released because the scientists involved are deeply divided. And of course the repercussions are huge. Billions of dollars are at stake.

And that's why there is concern about kids. They are a growing cellphone market, and possibly more vul-

nerable to cellphone radiation. This year, a Swedish scientist released preliminary data that shows kids who start using phones in their teens have a five times higher risk of developing brain cancer.

In the last two years, warnings about kids using cellphones have been issued in Germany, the U.K., France, Belgium, Israel, Russia, India and Finland. But in Canada? Even though this new evidence is out, Health Canada still says, "there is currently no convincing evidence of serious health effects."

So, until the answer is clear, what should parents do? Cellphones are a useful tool, but kids could limit their use. Make shorter calls. And remember that phones do emit radiation, so try to hold it a few centimetres from your head. Until we know more, a little bit of caution can't hurt anyone.

Wendy Mesley is a co-host of CBC News: Marketplace, Canada's award-winning consumer affairs show, and a regular back-up host with CBC News: The National. CBC News: Marketplace airs each Friday night at 8:30 p.m. (9 p.m. NT) on CBC Television.



Views

EPCOR is a tremendous success story

UrbanCompass

Terence Harding

This week provided good and bad news for Edmonton taxpayers.

The good news? The transfer of the Goldbar waste treatment plant to EPCOR is a done deal. You may not realize it, but EPCOR is one heck of an Edmonton success story. It's a well-run company with a tremendous reputation, provincially, nationally and internationally. That's one of the reasons it's able to hire and retain the talent it

needs to continue to be a success.

EPCOR makes money, and as a result, it consistently provides the city with revenue from its operations. But lest you think the only way EPCOR can be profitable is by reaching ever deeper into your pocket, keep in mind that much of its revenue comes from outside the city where it competes on a level playing field with private sector companies. When it comes to holding the line on cost increases, EPCOR consistently outperforms the city.

So how did the sleepy little utility once known as Edmonton Power become such a player in the generation of electricity and the provision of drinking water and waste water services? The answer

is simple; it was given the freedom to act at arm's length from the city. Though you and I are still owners of EPCOR, it can make the right business decisions free from the misguided machinations of the city council and administration.

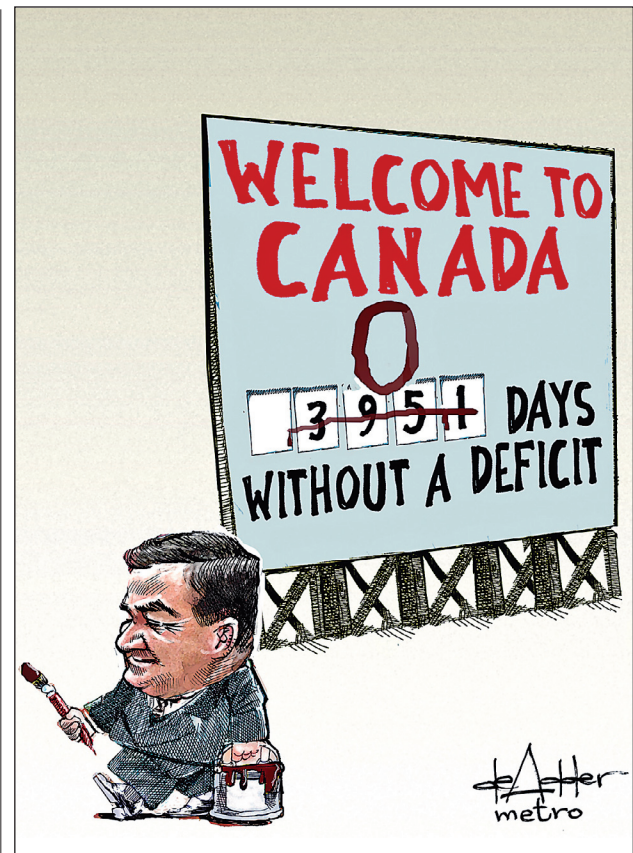
So, why is the increased ability of EPCOR to continue to do what it does well and to continue to contribute to the city coffers so important? Well, that's where the bad news comes in. City council is going to need more money to make up for the bad decisions it seems intent on making. Case in point, the Indy. Edmontonians are on the hook for \$5.3 million. That's a lot of sidewalks, my friends. We can all be thankful that city council is-

n't involved in the day-to-day-business decisions of EPCOR. Heaven only knows what we would be paying for water and power if it were.

Now comes the fun part. The message spin emanating from city council is meant to make you feel all warm and toasty about that loss. According to Indy supporters, the event generated economic spinoffs in excess of \$80 million and worldwide exposure for Edmonton. Apparently, that makes it worthwhile for the city to cover the \$5.3 million.

I'd like to see them prove that with more than words.

Terence Harding is a corporate communicator and a keen observer of all things Edmonton.



Letters

Obama's good looks too good for humour

Re: Obama too handsome to inspire biting satire, says Belgian news cartoonist, Jan. 21

What great news that, according to this article, satirical political cartoons about Obama will be difficult to make.

However, I'm glad not because of the specific point about Obama, but because I hope this news will reflect and herald increasing worldwide decline of satirical political content.

I've never thought television shows and cartoons that primarily (or even purely) aim to create humour by

ridiculing politicians and other figures, while neglecting to provide practical suggestions for change, ever contributed positively to our society in any non-superficial way.

If these cartoonists and humourists constantly believe that politicians mainly serve to be criticized, I suggest that they should try to get elected and enter governments, and show me how competent and skilled they would be in politicians' shoes.

Perhaps it's time to consider closing down this biting satire "industry."

STRATYOS IESKYR,
EDMONTON



Quote of the Day

"I would love for them to be right, but I think they're wide-eyed optimists right now."

— Derek Holt, economist at Scotia Capital reacting to a suggestion by the Bank of Canada that the recession will be harsh, but short-lived.

REUTERS

It's your turn to tell others what you think. E-mail your thoughts and opinions to: edmontonletters@metronews.ca

Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Vuitton, Hugo Boss upbeat on Christmas trade

Top European fashion houses Louis Vuitton and Hugo Boss said Christmas trading proved robust, sending a comforting message to the retail industry. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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Business

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Swift recovery seen

But top bank says sharp contraction this quarter

The Canadian economy will contract by an exceptionally sharp 4.8 per cent in the first quarter of this year and continue to shrink through mid-year, but the recovery will be swifter than in the past two recessions, the Bank of Canada said Thursday.

Signalling the economy is now in the most dramatic part of the downturn, the central bank said gross

Not as bad

• The Bank of Canada's projections of three quarters of recession this time contrasts with six quarters in 1981-82 and four quarters of contraction in the early 1990s.

domestic product likely shrank by 2.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year and would decline by

one per cent in the second quarter of this year before returning to growth.

It said the growing output gap would not be eliminated until mid-2011, but this would be about a year or more faster than in the past, partly because inflation expectations are better anchored and the bank has therefore been able to cut interest rates to lower levels.

REUTERS

Vacation bookings good, but analysts warn of drop

VACATIONS The desire of Canadians to escape the cold and snow with a March Break getaway has so far trumped concerns about an economic recession — but cracks are beginning to form in the packaged holiday industry.

Flight Centre spokesperson Allison Wallace said this month will be a litmus test when it comes to gauging the outlook for 2009.

"January is traditionally our busiest month for inquiries

and bookings and we're up on last year," she said.

Analysts, however, say it's a matter of time before Canadians put the brakes on unnecessary travel.

The threat of slumping demand comes at a particularly bad time for tour operators, which have collectively increased the seats they're selling in the North American market by more than 15 per cent this winter, according to analysts.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Microsoft to slash 5,000 jobs

WARNING Microsoft Corp. stunned Wall Street with disappointing results that included plans to slash up to 5,000 jobs and a warning that revenue will almost certainly drop over the next two quarters.

Microsoft's elimination of 5,000 jobs — 1,400 on

Thursday — amounts to about five per cent of its 96,000 work force.

Microsoft faces a shift by PC buyers to cheaper netbooks. The stripped-down laptops can run Windows, but Microsoft makes more on Windows for a PC.

REUTERS

Retail data shows bite of recession

DECLINE Canadian retail sales dropped by 2.4 per cent in November from October, the steepest decline in nearly 11 years, and analysts said they expected worse to come as the recession starts to bite harder.

The November decline easily exceeded the 1.5 per cent fall expected by market analysts and was the largest since the 4.5 per cent plunge recorded in January 1998, when much of Eastern Canada was hit by an ice storm.

The value of sales at gasoline stations plummeted by 14.9 per cent from October, reflecting lower prices. Sales at new car dealers fell 3.4 per cent.

Excluding the automotive sector, retail sales in November were flat.

REUTERS

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It through history the great religions have spoken to the return of a future Teacher. The Christians hope for the return of the Christ, the Buddhists look for the coming of a new Buddha, while the Muslims await the Imam Madhi, the Hindus a reincarnation of Krishna and the Jews the Messiah. How will we know Him? Surely He will ring our hearts with a message of sharing, justice and brotherhood. How can we prepare the way for Him? Each day brings opportunities, large and small, to act in favor of unity and justice. Our willingness to share will make a real difference in our world.

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Former Dallas Cowboys receiver Michael Irvin, left, is launching a reality TV show in which 12 "football neophytes" will compete for a spot on the Dallas Cowboys' training camp roster. The Cowboys confirmed that one of their 80 roster spots will go to the show's winner. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Sports

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA

Crosby out of all-star game

NHL Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby has withdrawn from Sunday's NHL all-star game because of injury, and Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis will take his spot on the Eastern Conference roster.

Crosby has been battling a knee injury, which forced him to miss last Friday's game against Anaheim. Crosby, who was voted a starter for this year's contest, did not play in last year's event because of a high ankle sprain.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports in brief

NBA According to a report in the New York Daily News, a deal that would send the Raptors' Jermaine O'Neal to Miami for Shawn Marion has progressed to the point where the teams have exchanged medical records on the players, usually a precursor to an imminent trade.

NBA Alonzo Mourning has decided to retire rather than mount another NBA comeback at age 38. The seven-time all-star centre said Thursday he won't return from a devastating leg injury Dec. 19, 2007 — the fourth anniversary of his lifesaving kidney transplant.



Alonzo Mourning won't return from a devastating leg injury Dec. 19, 2007 — the fourth anniversary of his lifesaving kidney transplant.

SKIING Swiss skier Daniel Albrecht sustained brain and lung injuries and was placed in an induced coma Thursday after crashing during downhill training in Austria.

NHL The Philadelphia Flyers announced Thursday that centre Danny Briere will miss at least a month of action after undergoing an exploratory surgical procedure on his groin/stomach area.

FOOTBALL A Kentucky high school football coach was charged Thursday with reckless homicide in the death of a player who collapsed at practice in August. David Jason Stinson was indicted in the death of Max Gilpin. Stinson was directing practice when the heat index reached 34 C and the 15-year-old collapsed. The player had a temperature of 42 C when he arrived at the hospital, authorities said, and died three days later.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Two girls and one common dream

On opposite ends of the earth, two 16-year-olds are ready to make some noise in the sports world

MARTY YORK
marty.york@metronews.ca

They live in different worlds, speak different languages and play different sports.

Yet it's uncanny that Japan's Eri Yoshida and Canada's Brigitte Lacquette have so much in common.

Both are 16, both are dominating male opponents and both are attracting excessive attention because of their abilities and potential.

Yoshida is blowing away batters with a remarkable sidearm knuckleball that recently landed her a professional contract in an all-male Japanese baseball league. She's being viewed in Japan as a pioneer and a symbol of the changing status of women in her country.

Lacquette is astonishing scouts by thoroughly outplaying male opponents in the Western Manitoba AA Midget Hockey League. She is her league's top talent. She was the youngest play-

er at the recent World Under-18 women's hockey championship in Germany and was chosen best defenceman.

"Several scouts have told me that, if Brigitte continues in the direction she's going, she'll be the greatest female hockey player in Canadian history," said Scott Taylor, sports editor of Grass Roots News, Manitoba's Aboriginal newspaper. "She's one of the few players I've seen who can do everything all game with her head up. She's so fast that she flies by opponents. And she's a great playmaker."

Brigitte lives in Mallard, Man. "We're nowhere," said her father, Terrence, a Metis who has lived in Mallard his entire life. "Our community has about 80 adults, 40 kids, 20 dogs and 15 cats."

Still, dozens of universities — including Cornell, Providence, Minnesota and North Dakota — have found her and are bombarding her with expressions of interest.

Brigitte, though, is only 5-foot-5 and so, barring a serious growth spurt, don't expect her to break the NHL's sex barrier.

Yoshida, though, has a serious chance to advance to MLB. She's only five feet but knuckleballers don't need size or strength. They need only to fool batters.

Yoshida recently left a line



Eri Yoshida signed a professional contract with a Japanese baseball team.



Brigitte Lacquette, centre, was named top blueliner at the under-18 women's hockey championship.

of nine veteran male batters hitless and baseball types think she could seriously perfect her pitch to major-league calibre.

"She can pitch," said Yoshihiro Nakada, her manager in the Kansai Independent League. "The media attention we get from her is most welcome, but that's not why she is on our team. She's with us because she's an excellent pitcher."

Yoshida started pitching in Grade Two, after her father showed her a video of Boston Red Sox knuckleballer Tim Wakefield.

"I'm honoured that she patterned herself after me," Wakefield was quoted as

saying recently. "I've heard great things about her. Apparently, she's amazing. I wish her the best of luck. Maybe I can learn something from her eventually. Nothing surprises me any more, so I wouldn't be surprised if she follows in the footsteps of other Japanese pitchers and winds up in the big leagues some day."

"The world is progressing," said Machiko Osawa, a professor at Japan Women's University. "The United States has an African-American president and Eri Yoshida has been accepted in the conservative world of sports."

"These are historical times."

Koskie wants to make comeback with Team Canada

While several Canadians are either not able or not interested in playing for their country's team at the World Baseball Classic in March, there's one who's quietly been busting his guts for the chance to participate.

In fact, after more than two seasons of inactivity because of post-concussion syndrome, Manitoban **Corey Koskie** is desperately trying to crack Team Canada's roster for what very

likely would be his last hurrah. Metro has learned the ex-Blue Jays third baseman has an agreement in writing with general manager **Greg Hamilton** that stipulates he'd be added to Team Canada's 45-man, preliminary roster if he is deemed physically fit by Feb. 1.

"My wife and I have talked lots about this," Koskie confirmed in an interview, "and we've agreed that (playing for Canada) would be a great way to retire."

Koskie, 35, said he has been working out diligently for months and has received permission from the Minnesota Twins to train at their camp in Fort Myers, Fla., in February if he gets

YorkReport

Marty York

marty.york@metronews.ca



the green light from Team Canada.

Koskie starred for the Twins from 1998 through 2004. He was the Jays' marquee free-agent acquisition for 2005 but struggled with injuries and was dealt to Milwaukee after the season. Concussions sidelined him while with the Brewers in 2006 and he had to sit out 2007 and 2008.

Should Koskie crack

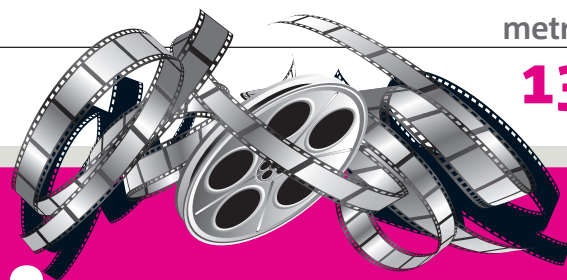
Team Canada's final, 28-man roster, he'd unlikely play much. Manager Ernie Whitt plans to start the Kansas City Royals' **Mark Teahen** at third base, the Houston Astros' **Chris Barnwell** at shortstop, the Washington Nationals' **Peter Orr** at second and Minnesota's **Justin Morneau** at first.

• **Doug Berry**, who coached the Blue Bombers to the Grey Cup game in 2007 and was fired by Winnipeg after the 2008 season, is desperately seeking work after the Toronto Argonauts rejected his applications to become their head or assistant coach ... Look for the Argos to acquire quarterback **Kevin Glenn**, at least as a backup to **Kerry**

Joseph, now that new Winnipeg coach **Mike Kelly** intends to trade the veteran ... Despite efforts by Argos co-owner **David Cynamon** to downplay it, **Michael (Pinball) Clemons** is indeed out as the club's chief shot-caller — as reported here Tuesday — and will take a significant pay cut to stay on in an ambassador role ... The Hamilton Tiger-Cats, meanwhile, have told QB **Casey Printers** he's not welcome back unless he accepts a pay cut that would reduce his \$450,000-a-year salary to less than \$200,000.

Marty York has been a groundbreaking sports columnist and broadcaster in Canada for decades.

Visit metronews.ca/movies to get showtimes, watch trailers and read reviews.



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Movies & Entertainment

EDITOR: DEAN LISK, DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Movies

Button tops Oscar noms

Pg 14



The Curious Case of Benjamin Button was the big leader at the announcement of this year's Academy Awards, receiving 13 nominations — including best picture, best actor and best adapted screenplay.

movies

Pg 16



Inkheart's screen adaptation pales in comparison to novel

music

Pg 18



New Pornographers frontman goes solo

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Pg 21



See why this revamped hybrid is making it into our hot list

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Movies

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Talking Oscars

What the stars are saying about their Academy nominations:



Brad Pitt
"This is a great honor for the movie, and I'm especially happy for David Fincher, for without him there would be no Ben Button."

— BRAD PITT, BEST ACTOR, THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON
PARAMOUNT STATEMENT

"My wife (Diane Lane) called me. It's her birthday and she said, 'It's the best present I could have gotten.' She sung me a happy nomination birthday song."

— JOSH BROLIN, BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR, MILK
PEOPLE.COM

"Working with Clint Eastwood was a reward in itself that will last me a lifetime. It has been an exceptional year for acting, and I am honoured to be in the company of these talented actors whose performances all deserve this recognition."



Angelina Jolie
— ANGELINA JOLIE, BEST ACTRESS
USWEEKLY.COM

"It is such a thrill to be recognized in this category with these remarkably talented women. I was with my parents and my dog when I got the news and we were all overjoyed — although I'm not sure my dog knew what was going on. This is a great day to be an actress!"

— ANNE HATHAWAY, BEST ACTRESS, RACHEL GETTING MARRIED
PEOPLE.COM



"I'm extremely happy to have been nominated. And very fortunate. Playing Hanna Schmitz will always remain one of the biggest challenges I've ever been blessed with."

— KATE WINSLET, BEST ACTRESS, THE READER
PEOPLE.COM



(Clockwise from left) Slumdog Millionaire received 10 nominations, including best picture; Gus van Sant's Milk picked up some major nominations, including best actor for Sean Penn. Anne Hathaway got a best actress nod for Rachel Getting Married; Mickey Rourke was nominated for The Wrestler; and Waltz With Bashir picked up a nomination for best foreign film.

The race begins

Button, Slumdog lead Oscar nominations

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, a drama in which Brad Pitt plays a man who ages backward, led the field of Oscar contenders with 13 nominations, organizers said Thursday.

Slumdog Millionaire, the tale of an impoverished orphan's improbable victory on an Indian television game show, followed with 10, while the Batman sequel The Dark Knight and the gay-rights saga Milk each landed eight.

Benjamin Button, Slumdog Millionaire and Milk will vie for best picture at the 81st annual Academy Awards, alongside The Reader and Frost/Nixon. All five also had best director nominations.

Clint Eastwood's recent box office champ Gran Torino was notably snubbed, with no nominations.

As expected, late Australian actor Heath Ledger was nominated for his supporting role as the villainous Joker in The Dark Knight.

The Dark Knight, the biggest box office smash since Titanic in 1997, had been seen as having an outside shot at a best picture slot but all of its other nominations ended up be-

ing in technical categories.

With 13 nominations, Benjamin Button falls one short of the record shared by All About Eve (1959) and Titanic. Its nominations included best actor for Pitt, best director for David Fincher, best supporting actress for Taraji P. Henson and best adapted screenplay for Eric Roth and Robin Swicord.

Loosely based on a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Benjamin Button has been a commercial and critical success, and will likely combine with The Dark Knight to boost the

The 81st Annual Academy Awards

Oscar's ratings.

In recent years, Academy voters have favored smaller, arthouse pictures and TV viewers stayed away in droves.

"It is a good across-the-board look at movies of the past year," said Sid Ganis, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. "I like the list because it is somewhat not as predicted. It goes from little old

Slumdog to big Benjamin Button."

Meryl Streep, 59, already the all-time acting Oscar record holder with 14 nominations, landed her 15th for her lead role in Doubt, in which she plays a vindictive nun.

Other leading films included the animated feature WALL-E with six nominations and Doubt, Frost/Nixon and The Reader with five each.

• The Oscars will be presented Feb. 22 at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood. Australian actor Hugh Jackman will host. **REUTERS**

Ledger's Joker strikes again

NOMINATION Heath Ledger's action movie villain The Joker is getting the last laugh over Hollywood. The Australian actor's best supporting actor Oscar nomination Thursday came exactly a year after he died of an accidental prescription-drug overdose and was a rare exception

to the rule that Oscar voters overlook action hero movies. Not only did Ledger help the Batman sequel The Dark Knight become the biggest movie since Titanic, but he also picked up a slew of awards for his chilling but compelling

role as The Joker.

Thursday's Oscar nomination put Ledger in line for only the second posthumous Academy Award to be handed out to an actor. Peter Finch won for 1976's Network about two months after he suffered a fatal heart attack, aged 60.

"Oscar voters are notorious snobs who turn up their noses at superhero movies. This may be popcorn, but it is gourmet popcorn," said Tom O'Neil, a movie columnist. **REUTERS**

List of nominees

Best Picture

• The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Frost/Nixon; Milk; The Reader; Slumdog Millionaire.

Best Actor

• Richard Jenkins - The Visitor; Frank Langella - Frost/Nixon; Sean Penn - Milk; Brad Pitt - The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Mickey Rourke - The Wrestler.

Best Actress

• Anne Hathaway - Rachel Getting Married; Angelina Jolie - Changeling; Melissa Leo - Frozen River; Meryl Streep - Doubt; Kate Winslet - The Reader.

Best Supporting Actor

• Josh Brolin - Milk; Robert Downey Jr. - Tropic Thunder; Philip Seymour Hoffman - Doubt; Heath Ledger - The Dark Knight; Michael Shannon - Revolutionary Road

Best Supporting Actress

• Amy Adams - Doubt; Penelope Cruz - Vicky Cristina Barcelona; Viola Davis - Doubt; Taraji P. Henson - The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Marisa Tomei - The Wrestler.

Best Director

• David Fincher - The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Ron Howard - Frost/Nixon; Gus Van Sant - Milk; Stephen Daldry - The Reader; Danny Boyle - Slumdog Millionaire

Best Animated Feature

• Bolt; Kung-Fu Panda; WALL-E.

Best Foreign Language Film

• The Baader Meinhof Complex - Germany; The Class - France; Departures - Japan; Revanche - Austria; Waltz with Bashir - Israel

Best Foreign Language Film

• The Baader Meinhof Complex - Germany; The Class - France; Departures - Japan; Revanche - Austria; Waltz with Bashir - Israel

Best Adapted Screenplay

• Eric Roth and Robin Swicord, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; John Patrick Shanley, Doubt; Peter Morgan, Frost/Nixon; David Hare, The Reader; Simon Beaufoy, Slumdog Millionaire.

Best Original Screenplay

• Courtney Hunt, Frozen River; Mike Leigh, Happy-Go-Lucky; Martin McDonagh, In Bruges; Dustin Lance Black, Milk; Andrew Stanton, Jim Reardon and Pete Docter, "WALL-E."

Original Score

• The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, Alexandre Desplat; Defiance, James Newton Howard; Milk, Danny Elfman; Slumdog Millionaire, A.R. Rahman; WALL-E, Thomas Newman.

• More nominees at metronews.ca

Correction

The Uninvited opens in theatres across Canada on Jan. 30, not this Friday. An incorrect date appeared in Wednesday's issue of Metro.

Movies

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Star pair about Town

Zellweger, Connick Jr. dish on rom-com

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada



"I refuse to be upstaged by Mother Nature!" shouted actor-musician Harry Connick Jr. in a rattling West Hollywood hotel room recently. See, together with co-star Renée Zellweger, he was promoting their latest movie when a California earthquake suddenly struck.

Only it didn't. After a few minutes and some nervous laughs, everyone realized the vibrations were in fact, due to some aggressive machinery on the floor below and indeed not Mother Nature.

Still, if nothing else, the impromptu moment gave us all a glimpse into the type of unrehearsed levity the pair had just experienced making their latest romantic-comedy *New In Town* — in theatres next Friday.

"The prospect of working



Renée Zellweger plays an executive who goes to Minnesota to shut down a plant in the romantic comedy *New In Town*.

with Renée and the idea I had about working with her (was what) really made me want to do it," says Connick Jr., before joking dryly: "Unfortunately none of the things I thought would happen happened, but still the idea of it was great."

The story of an ambitious executive (Zellweger) who

temporarily relocates to Minnesota to shut down a plant run by a rugged union boss (Connick Jr.), *New In Town* was actually filmed in Winnipeg last year during a record-breaking cold snap. Like the earthquake-that-wasn't, the cast refused to let Mother Nature dampen their spirits.

Movie feature

"I don't think there was a day when we weren't laughing until our eyelids were frozen together from tears," said Zellweger, adding that such extreme weather may have actually helped bond the group.

As for living in Manitoba over the winter, Zellweger was happy to remain "new in town" herself and admits, like her character, she too lacks a certain doggedness to reside in climates where the temperature is low and the snow is deep.

"The tenacity of the people was just so impressive. To me, when you look outside, you think, 'where's the road? I guess there's no driving today?' but that's not the case," said a surprised Zellweger. "Everybody just gets up and gets on with it like it's normal."

Twilight actress off to Adventureland

FEATURE Vampire romance *Twilight* hurtled Kristen Stewart to the kind of fame that can turn a life into a roller coaster ride, so it seems appropriate that her new movie revolves around an amusement park.

Adventureland, which premiered this week at the Sundance Film Festival, is one of a string of quirky movies Stewart, 18, has starred-in since her first film at age 11.

But none of those movies ever brought the actress the sort of attention she has received the last two months since *Twilight* struck gold at box offices with more than \$324 million US worldwide since its November debut.

In the movie, Stewart portrayed Bella Swan, a love-struck teen adored by millions of young girls after they began devouring the series of books on which the movie is based.

Stewart is a child of Hollywood — the daughter of



Kristen Stewart

a stage manager and a script supervisor — and her Los Angeles upbringing provided a close up view of fame that

has helped her handle the three-ring media circus of Hollywood celebrity.

"I grew up on a set," she told Reuters at Sundance. "I don't take it as seriously, and then at the same time I take it more seriously than anyone. It's like a balance."

Adventureland is a coming-of-age movie about a recent college graduate named James, played by *The Squid and the Whale* star Jesse Eisenberg, who takes a summer job at an amusement park and falls in love with a tortured but sincere young carnival worker named Em Lewin (Stewart).

REUTERS

"FOUR PAWS UP!"

KCLV-TV (LAS VEGAS) JEFFREY K. HOWARD

The New York Times

STEPHEN HOLDEN

"CUTER-THAN-CUTE, SWEETER-THAN-SWEET!"



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DREAMWORKS PICTURES

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Saving Brendan Fraser

InFocus

Richard Crouse

mrchaos33@hotmail.com



Critics used to love Brendan Fraser. Early on Roger Ebert called him “subtle and attuned” and Barbara Ellen in The Times raved that he was “a revelation — so measured, suave and intrinsically watchable.”

That was then. This is now.

Lately the tone of his reviews has taken a turn. “Noticeably uninvolved” and “worn out” are just two descriptions of his current work in movies like The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor. One blogger even wrote, with simple hateful eloquence, “His face makes me angry.”

I thought of this as I watched Inkheart. A big budget fantasy adventure, it encapsulates everything that’s wrong with Fraser’s career. It’s another forgettable performance in an unremarkable movie that allows the premise and the CGI to overshadow everything else. According to avclub.com, in recent years this guy has spent so much time in front of a green screen “his children probably have traces of CGI in their DNA.”

Of course Fraser would counter that he’s not making films for the critics, but judging by the gross of the last Mummy movie, he’s not making them for audiences either.

But let’s put the snarkiness aside for a moment and remember a time when Fraser was actually considered a real actor. Years before he discovered the financial benefits of emoting in front of a green screen he made small, interesting, character-driven



Brendan Fraser’s latest movie Inkheart is a good example of what’s wrong with his career, says columnist Richard Crouse.

films.

For example, in Gods and Monsters Fraser played Clay Boone, a young straight ex-Marine who forms a bond with James Whale, the elderly gay director of Frankenstein played by Ian McKellen. Fraser’s take on Clay is complicated but sympathetic as he forms a platonic relationship with the older man who becomes the father figure he never had. In this film Fraser

holds his own against the masterful McKellen.

The Quiet American sees Fraser as Alden Pyle, an idealist who must learn to deal with moral ambiguity. Again his work is well crafted and thoughtful.

Further acting high points include the image obsessed district attorney in Crash; and Journey to the End of Night’s Paul, a degenerate gambler who double-crosses his father and tries to run off with the cash.

Not since Orson Welles voiced commercials for a frozen pea company has one actor squandered his talent so flagrantly, so let’s remember Fraser for the good ones — the ones listed above as well as 1997’s Still Breathing — and hope that he gets over his green screen addiction sooner rather than later.

Richard Crouse is the author of Son of the 100 Best Movies You’ve Never Seen and film critic for CTV’s Canada AM.

Inkheart better on page

Inkheart

Director: Iain Softley

Stars: Brendan Fraser

Classification: STC

Rating: ●●●½

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

REVIEW In his new movie Inkheart, Brendan Fraser utters this slice of reverberating dialogue: “The written word is a powerful thing. Better be careful with it.”

Nowhere is this perhaps better demonstrated than in the new fantasy adaptation of Cornelia Funke’s hit novel in which Fraser — as bookbinder Mo Folchart — possesses the supernatural ability to bring fictional characters to life just by reading them aloud.

Sure, that might sound like a cool party trick but while Folchart uncovered his talent reading a tome called Inkheart, he also discovered that a real person

On the web

• To see an Inkheart trailer, and screen times, visit metronews.ca/movies

is traded in reciprocation — namely, his wife.

Now, a decade later, the only way to rescue her is to find a copy of Inkheart and read her back out of the novel.

Along the way, Folchart and his daughter (Eliza Bennett) meet a dizzying array of characters including the book’s desperate hero (Paul Bettany), a conspiring antagonist called Capricorn as well as flying monkeys, a unicorn, Rapunzel and Toto from The Wizard of Oz.

While director Iain Softley is able to engage with big epic stunts and grand effects, Inkheart ironically loses its audience with a convoluted story that never fully satisfies many of its own questions. The notion of swapping real folks with characters in a book is intriguing, but the film never fully gives it reason.

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This week's new releases are highlighted in pink.

Screen Times

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., JAN. 23 TO THURS., JAN. 29. TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. COMPLETE LISTINGS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT METRONEWS.CA/MOVIES.

CITY CENTRE 9 CINEMAS10200 102nd Ave., 780-421-7020

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Digital Presentation Fri-Thu 12:3-40-7:20

Frost/Nixon (PG) DTS Digital Fri-Thu 12:40-3:35-6:40-9:40

Gran Torino (14A) DTS Digital Fri-Thu 12:10-3-7-9:50

Notorious (18A) DTS Digital Fri-Thu 12:30-3:30-6:35-9:30

Revolutionary Road (14A) DTS Digital Fri-Thu 12:25-3:20-6:30-9:20

Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 12:20-3:10-6:50-9:15

CLAREVIEW 10 CINEMAS4211 139th Ave., 780-472-7600

Bride Wars (PG) Fri 4:40-7:20-9:35 Sat-Sun 1:45-4:40-7:20-9:35 Mon-Thu 4:40-7:20-9:35

Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri 3:50-6:40-9:30 Sat-Sun 1-3:50-6:40-9:30 Mon-Thu 3:50-6:40-9:30

Gran Torino (14A) Fri 4:05-6:45-9:25 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:05-6:45-9:25 Mon-Thu 4:05-6:45-9:25

Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri 4-6:35-9 Sat-Sun 1:30-4-6:35-9 Mon-Thu 4-6:35-9

Inkheart (PG) Fri 4:10-7-9:40 Sat-Sun 1:10-4:10-7-9:40 Mon-Thu 4:10-7-9:40

Last Chance Harvey (PG) Fri-Thu 9:15

My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Fri 4:30-7:10-9:45 Sat-Sun 1:40-4:30-7:10-9:45 Mon-Thu 4:30-7:10-9:45

Notorious (18A) Fri 3:45-6:30-9:20 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:45-6:30-9:20 Mon-Thu 3:45-6:30-9:20

Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri 4:20-6:50-9:10 Sat-Sun 1:50-4:20-6:50-9:10 Mon-Thu 4:20-6:50-9:10 Mon 1

The Unborn (14A) Fri 4:25-6:55 Sat-Sun 2:10-4:25-6:55 Mon-Thu 4:25-6:55

Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) Fri 4:50-7:30-9:50 Sat-Sun 2-4:50-7:30-9:50 Mon-Thu 4:50-7:30-9:50

GARNEAU THEATRE8712 - 109 St., 780-433-2212

Slumdog Millionaire (14A) Fri 6:50-9:25 Sat-Sun 2-6:50-9:25 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:25

METRO CINEMA

Zeidler Hall, Citadel Theatre Complex, 9828-101 Ave., 780-425-9212, metrocinema.org

Alice's House (STC) Fri 7 Sat 9 Sun 7 Mon 9

Best of Ottawa 2008 (STC) Fri 9 Sat 7 Sun 9 Mon 7

Unforgotten (STC) Thu 7:30

MOVIES 12

5074 130 Ave., 780-472-9779

Australia (PG) Fri-Sat 12:50-4:05-7:40-11 Sun-Thu 12:50-4:05-7:40

Beverly Hills Chihuahua (G) Fri-Sat 2-4:45-7:20-9:35-11:45 Sun-Thu 2-4:45-7:20-9:35

Changeling (14A) Fri-Thu 4-9:30

Four Christmases (PG) Fri-Sat 1:40-4:25-6:45-9:20-11:30 Sun-Thu 1:40-4:25-6:45-9:20

High School Musical 3: Senior Year (G) Fri-Thu 1:30-7:05

Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (G) Fri-Sat 1:35-4:40-7-9:10 Sun-Thu 1:35-4:40-7-9:10

Nights in Rodanthe (PG) Fri-Sat 1:15-4:10-6:40-9:15-12 Sun-Thu 1:15-4:10-6:40-9:15

Quantum of Solace (14A) Fri-Sat 1:45-4:30-7:15-9:45-12:05 Sun-Thu 1:45-4:30-7:15-9:45

Rachel Getting Married (STC) Fri-Sat 1:25-4:15-6:50-9:25-11:40 Sun-Thu 1:25-4:15-6:50-9:25

Role Models (14A) Fri-Sat 2:05-4:50-7:30-9:55-12:15 Sun-Thu 2:05-4:50-7:30-9:55

The Tale of Despereaux (G) Fri-Sat 1:50-4:20-6:50-9:05-11:20 Sun-Thu 1:50-4:20-6:50-9:05

Transporter 3 (14A) Fri-Sat 1:55-4:35-7:10-9:50-12:10 Sun-Thu 1:55-4:35-7:10-9:50

Twilight (PG) Fri-Sat 1:20-4:05-6:55-9:40-12:10 Sun-Thu 1:20-4:05-6:55-9:40

NORTH EDMONTON CINEMAS

14231 137th Ave., 780-732-2236

Christian Bale stars in The Dark Knight, which is currently in theatres.

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Thu 1:30-4:20

Bride Wars (PG) Fri-Thu 12:40-2:50-5-7:20-9:50

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:05-3:45-7:30

Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:50-7-10:15

Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Thu 12:50-3:40-7:05-10:05

Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 12-2:30-4:50-7:15-9:30

Last Chance Harvey (PG) Fri-Thu 1:20-4:10-6:40-9

Marley & Me (PG) Fri-Thu 1-3:30-6:30-9:15

Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 11

My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:50-7:50-10:30

Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Tue 12:20-2:40-5:10-7:40-10:10 Wed 5:10-7:40-10:10 Thu 12:20-2:40-5:10-7:40-10:10 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1

Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 1:10-4-6:50-9:40 Sat-Tue 1:10-4-6:50-9:40 Wed 4-6:50-9:40 Thu 1:10-4-6:50-9:40 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1

The Unborn (14A) Fri-Thu 1:50-5:15-8:10-10:35

Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:10-2:45-5:30-8-10:40

The Wrestler (14A) Fri-Thu 1:40-4:30-7-10-10

Yes Man (14A) Fri-Thu 6:45-9:10

PRINCESS I & II

10337 Whyte Ave., 780-433-0728

Defiance (14A) Fri 6:45-9:20 Sat-Sun 2-6:45-9:20 Mon-Thu 6:45-9:20

The Wrestler (14A) Fri 7-9:10 Sat-Sun 2:30-7-9:10 Mon-Thu 7-9:10

SCOTIABANK THEATRE WEST MALL

8882 170th St., 780-444-2400

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Tue 12:40-3:50-6:45-9:15 Wed 12:40-3:50-9:40 Thu 12:40-3:50-6:45-9:15

Bride Wars (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:20-6:30-9:20

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12-4-8

The Dark Knight: The IMAX Experience (PG) No Passes Fri 12-3:30-7-10:15 Sat-Thu 12-3:30-7-10:15

Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:15-3:40-6:50-9:50

Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Tue 12:20-3:15-7:15-10:15 Wed 3:40-7:15-10:15 Thu 12:20-3:15-7:15-10:15 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1

Inkheart (PG) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-6:40-

9:40

Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7

Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 11

Notorious (18A) Fri-Thu 1:20-4:20-7:20-10:30

Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Tue 12:50-3:30-7-9:30 Wed 12:50-3:30-6:35-9:50 Thu 12:50-3:30-7-9:30

The Unborn (14A) Fri-Thu 2-4:40-7:50-10:20

Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:10-2:30-5-7:40-10:30

Valkyrie (PG) Fri 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:10 Sat 1:20-4:10-7:10-10:10 Sun-Tue 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:10 Wed 1:10-4:10-10:10 Thu 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:10

WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 6

Yes Man (14A) Fri-Sat 1:30-4:30-7:30-10 Sun 12-2:30-10 Mon-Tue 1:30-4:30-7:30-10 Wed 4:30-7:30-10 Thu 1:30-4:30-7:30-10 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1

SOUTH EDMONTON COMMON

1525 99th St., 780-436-8585

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Thu 12:05-2:30-4:50

Bride Wars (PG) Fri-Thu 1:50-4:40-7:25-10:05

Chandni Chowk to China (PG) Fri-Thu 12-4-8

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-4:05-8

Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-6:50-9:45

Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Wed 1:20-4:15-7:10-10:10 Thu 4:15-7:10-10:10 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1

Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 1:30-4:10-6:45-9:20

Inkheart (PG) Fri-Thu 1:15-4:20-7:20-10

Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7

Marley & Me (PG) Fri-Sat 1:10-4:30-7:40-10:15 Sun 1:10-4:25-10:15 Mon-Tue 1:10-4:30-7:40-10:15 Wed 1:10-3:50-10:15 Thu 1:10-4:30-7:40-10:15

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Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri-Thu 12:40-3:30-6:55-9:55

Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 12:50-4-7-10:20 Sat-Thu 12:50-4-7-10:20

The Unborn (14A) Fri-Sat 1:45-4:35-7:35-10:15 Sun 1:45-7:35-10:15 Mon-Thu

1:45-4:35-7:35-10:15

Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:10-2:45-5-7:50-10:30

Valkyrie (PG) Fri-Tue 12:20-3:20-6:40-9:30

9:30 Wed 12:20-3:20-10 Thu 12:20-3:20-6:40-9:30

WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 6

Yes Man (14A) Fri-Thu 7:15-9:40

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Do it daily.



1. Performing This Week ... Live At Ronnie Scott's, Jeff Beck, right; 2. Slumdog Millionaire, Original Soundtrack; 3. Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog, Various; 4. Fleet Foxes, Fleet Foxes; 5. Hit Man: Various. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Music

A.C. Newman guilty as charged

The New Pornographers frontman turns up the volume on his new solo album

BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI
for Metro Canada

Don't worry if A.C. Newman's solo career confuses you. Usually, when a frontman for a successful band — in this case Vancouver's The New Pornographers — releases a solo album, it often sounds much different from the guy's day job. But not so with Newman, whose rich, Beach Boys-like pop stylings appears on everything he touches. Plus, to him, every record he releases comes from the same place.

"I think Get Guilty is a louder record than Chal-

lengers is," says Newman, comparing his latest solo effort to his last New Pornographers record in the same breath. "I think I'm always trying to change it up, it doesn't matter whether it's a Pornographers album or not."

Clearly, he doesn't view his New Pornographers-self as separate from his solo career. And, while Neko Case and Dan Bejar aren't singing on Get Guilty — Newman's second album sans super-group — it's still got the same harmony laden tracks and sunny upbeat vibe that's made the now New York-based song-

writer's band what it is.

So, if his own material isn't that different from his band's music, why put out a solo album at all? "There is no really good reason for it," he says. "I just do it because I can."

Newman points out that he wrote his first album — 2004's *Slow Wonder* — after thinking The New Pornographers were breaking up. Neko Case decided to embark on her own solo career, which meant his band wasn't touring. Instead of waiting around, he recorded *Slow Wonder* during the time off.

This time, however, *Get Guilty*, was written so he



A.C. Newman, frontman for The New Pornographers, has released a new solo album.

could "record the next New Pornographers record with a clean start in my head.

"I wrote it as kind of a palate cleaning," he explains further. "It's hard to describe, but for some reason, at the end of making *Challengers*, I decided I was going to write a solo record. There's one song on the disc that I started writing while the Pornographers were mixing. I left the studio and played it in to my phone."

As he's talking Newman, again, wonders aloud why he decided to record another solo album, as if he just realized that it's somewhat redundant. "There's

not really any logic to this," he remarks. "I guess it seemed to soon do another Pornos record."

But, logistically, it did make more sense for him to create a non-NP album, considering who else is releasing a record this year.

"I wanted to make sure the Pornos and Neko don't put out records near each other," he says, finally hitting on the most rational explanation for releasing a solo album. "If this had been a Pornographers record it would have been out in January and Neko's record would have been out two months later. She can feel free to stomp all over my solo album, but

the Pornos and Neko shouldn't conflict with each other."

TOP 10 MOBILE DOWNLOADS

1. Heartless Kanye West
2. Poker Face Lady GaGa
3. I'm So Proud Akon
4. Live Your Life T.I. ft. Rihanna
5. Right Now Akon
6. Single Ladies Beyoncé
7. Love Story Taylor Swift
8. Hot N Cold Katy Perry
9. Rock N' Roll Train AC/DC
10. Circus Britney Spears

rogers.com/musicstore



Swift stays atop chart

Teen country star Taylor Swift began a seventh week at No. 1 on the U.S. pop album chart Wednesday, a feat that hasn't been accomplished since Usher spent nine weeks at the top in 2004 with *Confessions*.

Swift's *Fearless* sold a modest 63,000 copies during the week ended Jan. 18, according to Nielsen Sound-Scan.



Sales to date stand at 2.3 million.

Fearless also becomes the longest-running No. 1 album by a solo female vocalist since Alanis Morissette wore the crown for 12 weeks in 1995 with *Jagged Little Pill*.

Beyoncé's *I Am ... Sasha Fierce* rebounded two places to No. 2 with 49,000 copies. Canadian rock band Nickelback's *Dark Horse* slipped one place to No. 3 with 46,000.

REUTERS

Group protests new Spears song

SINGLES The Parents Television Council is warning about the Britney Spears song *If U Seek Amy* and urging radio stations not to broadcast it because the nonprofit organization believes it "would violate the broadcast indecency law."

Saying the title phrase quickly out loud produces a sound akin to spelling out the F-word, said PTC president Tim Winter.

"There is no misinterpreting the lyrics to this song, and it's certainly not about a girl named Amy," he said.

REUTERS

Metro recommends

• **NOTORIOUS, ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK:** Biggie-sized soundtrack features classic tracks, a duet with his son, a tribute from Jay-Z and early demos.



• **A.C. NEWMAN, GET GUILTY:** New Pornographers frontman explores the more elaborate facets of his power pop sound with tinges of psychedelia.



• **KETCH HARBOUR WOLVES, DEAD CALM HORIZON:** Refined indie-rock soaked in harmonies and sweeping layers of lush instrumentation.



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This Day In Music History

On this day in 1989 James Brown is sentenced in Georgia to six years in jail in connection with a police chase through two different states. **REUTERS**



Franz Ferdinand embraces Soviet technology

SoundCheck

Alan Cross



alan@ongoinghistory.com

Franz Ferdinand singer Alex Kapranos looks pretty sharp for a man who, not 12 hours earlier, was in the middle of a sweaty club gig as part of a barnstorming promo ride for the group's third album. Drummer Paul Thomson isn't quite as chipper, although that can be attributed to a metabolism that doesn't process caffeine quite as efficiently. He perks up. Eventually.

After two albums in 18 months, it's been three years since the group's last album. So, what took so long? "Making this new record was different. The time it took wasn't so much a luxury as a necessity," sighs Kapranos.

"The adrenalin just runs out," offers Thomson.

There's been a substantial amount of fan speculation on the sound and direction of Tonight: Franz Ferdinand. Were the spiky, dual-tempo arrangements thrown in the bin? Was it going to have African influences? Or had it all gone Jamaican dub?

"There are elements to truth to all those things," Kapranos says. "We listened to African music and Dan Carey, our producer, comes from a dub

background. But it's still a Franz Ferdinand record. I mean, I listen to Dizzy Gillespie, but it doesn't mean we're going to make a be-bop record."

Well, maybe, but Domino — FF's U.K. label — is going to put out a special version of the album mixed in a dub style. Kapranos and Thomas say it's an experiment. The version of the album that most people will hear, starting Tuesday, features experiments of its own, including the use of a long-forgotten Soviet-era synthesizer called a Polyvox.

"It was another case of reverse engineering where the Soviets went, 'Right, we can build our own version of these (things)' — and would get it kind of wrong," explain Kapranos. "But their 'kind of wrong' is 'kind of good.' And it's true with the Polyvox. There was an electronic engineer in Kiev, I think, and he wanted to build a Moog (a U.S.-built synth). He knew the theory of how a Moog was built and had heard what they sounded like but had never seen one. So he built this machine that looks like the control panel of a Soviet tank, with big knobs and dials Cyrillic labels everywhere. And it sounds ... kind of vaguely like a Moog — but not really. It just sounds ... cool."

The whole FF story is coming up on my Ongoing History of New Music the first week of February.

The Ongoing History of New Music can be heard on stations across Canada. Read more at ongoinghistory.com and exploremusic.com

The book on ink

Tattoo artist Kat Von D puts pen to paper

BRIAN TOWIE
Metro Canada



Getting a tattoo? Whatever you do, don't copy your favourite celebrities.

It's among the handy tips of tattooing dos and don'ts to be found in Kat Von D's new book, *High Voltage Tattoo*, a photo-driven compendium of one of the world's most notorious tattoo artist's previous work, artistic influences and childhood memories. The star of TLC show *L.A. Ink* and partner of Mötley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx delves into the often misunderstood world of tattoo art and

the stories behind her markings and those of her best friends and previous clients.

"It was a long time coming," says Von D (nee Katherine Von Drachenberg). "The show educates people about the tattoo world and the book is a more in-depth personal look at it."

The Los Angeles-based tattoo artist and soon to be film star (appearing in 2009 vampire flick *The Bleeding*) has tattooed celebrities such as Jackass' Steve-O and Bam Margera



PHOTO COURTESY HIGH VOLTAGE TATTOO

"The best advice I'd give anyone getting a tattoo for the first time would be to have a 100 per cent certain idea of what you want to get."

Kat Von D

among others. She showcases designs as elaborate and dynamic as something found in an art museum, from reproductions of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* on the side of a torso, to more comedic works. Her personal favourites are two portraits of a friend's grandparents. Over the grandfather lies a banner saying, "Mona, get me a beer!" The grandmother's depiction replies, "Get it yourself!"

"Tattoos are a collaborative thing," the 26 year old says. "The dynamic between artist and client is a pretty free one. The client comes in with an idea and they create a vision together. The idea is always rooted with a client and a good tattooer will take it and make it better."

The world of tattoos isn't all wild rock 'n' roll abandon, however. Von D says she's taken sharp criticism from purists in the business who accuse her of "selling

out." Keeping a steady hand while you work on someone's skin can also demand a great deal of strength and stamina. Von D points to Dec 14, 2007, where she set a Guinness World Record for doing the most tattoos in a 24-hour period by tattooing more than 400 arms, backs, legs and rear ends. "I just crashed for a whole day when I was done," she said.

It's no cakewalk for a recipient, either. You'll sit in a chair in uncomfortable circumstances for a period of time, so Von D suggests you have a fair idea of what you want done.

"The best advice I'd give anyone getting a tattoo for the first time would be to have a 100 per cent certain idea of what you want to get and not to get something because Nicole Richie has it," she said. "And don't get it because your boyfriend wants you to. And do your research: There's a lot of talent out there that nobody knows about."

Fresh ink

• High Voltage Tattoo is the new book from Kat Von D.



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Television

Warning: 2009 Oscars promise to be a snooze

IntelleVision



RED CARPET BLUES: The awards season culminates next month in the Oscars, the worst show ever that millions of people watch with what we can only assume is the hope that a celebrity will embarrass themselves with a blubbing acceptance speech that bares their pitiful insecurity for all the world to see.

Actually, the conventional wisdom is that people watch the interminable movie awards ceremony to see a film they enjoyed win, with the corollary effect that the highest-rated Os-

"Nominations for the Oscars were announced yesterday (and) absent was The Dark Knight, a film whose massive box office clearly inspired reverse esteem in the Academy's voters."

cars are the ones where a blockbuster like Titanic or a Lord Of The Rings film does a sweep. If this is true — and there's more than enough evidence to assume that it is — then Marc Caro of the Chicago Tribune is right and ABC will be taking a bath on its broadcast this year.

Nominations for the Oscars were announced yesterday, and conspicuously absent was The Dark Knight, a film whose massive box office clearly inspired reverse esteem in the Academy's voters. Only a posthumous nod for Heath Ledger's Joker as Best Supporting Actor put The Dark

Knight in any of the top categories, though it's well-represented in the technical categories (art direction, cinematography, sound mixing and editing,) when viewers usually get their pizza delivery.

Continuing a trend that's dominated the Oscars for a few years now, the films with the most high-profile nominations are either critical duds, box office underperformers — or both. "The Reader is a best picture (and director) nominee, and The Dark Knight is not," writes Caro with obvious disbelief. "Yes, the highbrow Holocaust film with lukewarm reviews is in the game!"

The 81st Annual Academy Awards

Even the best song category won't pull in viewers, as voters swatted away the chance to have Bruce Springsteen, Miley Cyrus, Beyoncé or even Clint Eastwood perform in favour of Peter Gabriel doing the credits song from Wall-E (i.e. the cue to head for the exits) and no less than two songs from Slumdog Millionaire, which will at least mean some Bollywood production values. It's at times like this that network executives outdo Hugo Chavez in their contempt for fickle, ungovernable democracy.

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

Rick's TV Picks

Battlestar Galactica

Air date: Jan. 23
Network: Space

Cancer, depression, demoralization, rebellion, cuckoldry; it's another happy hour on the non-stop party spaceship as the show picks up speed for the final stretch. **SPOILER ALERT:** At least no one dies.

Confessions of a Teen Idol

Air date: Jan. 25
Network: MuchMoreMusic

YOU might have heard of at least three of the seven men making a second

lunge for fame in this VH1 reality show hosted by Scott Baio. One of them won't be the guy from the first season of The Real World.

Project Runway Canada

Air date: Jan. 27
Network: Global

THE Canadian franchise of the fashion reality show gets upgraded from Slice to the mother network for its second season. If nothing else, the show has done the nation a service by proving at least our fashion designers can be bitchy on a global standard.

—RICK MCGINNIS/
METRO CANADA

**CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS FOR
SHOWS' AIR TIMES**

Reality TV nets labour win

TELEVISION Several major U.S. TV networks and the producers of such reality shows as Trading Spouses and The Bachelor have agreed to pay over \$4 million to settle two lawsuits claiming violations of California wage rules.

The settlement will benefit more than 400 workers who were part of the 3-year-old class-action cases, and some of those individuals stand to reap tens of thousands of dollars, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, Emma Leheny, said. **REUTERS**

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St. John's to host 2010 Junos
The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences along with broadcast partner CTV announced yesterday that St. John's, N.L., will host the 2010 Juno Awards.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Mix of Six

HOT & HAPPENING WEEKEND EVENTS AROUND THE CITY

For more great events around the city, visit: metronews.ca/entertainment

Glitch Mob

When: Friday, 9 p.m.
Where: The Pawn Shop (10551 – 82 Avenue)

The four-man musical collaboration from San Francisco, The Glitch Mob, are in Edmonton for a one-night show. Tickets available at Foosh, Blackbyrd, Farside and at Ticketmaster. \$20 in advance.

Chinese New Year buffet

When: Sunday, noon to 10 p.m.
Where: Padmanadi (10626 – 97 Street)

Come celebrate Chinese New Year with the city's best vegetarian cuisine at Padmanadi. First-come, first-served. \$12.

Edmonton Queen: The Final Voyage

When: Friday, 8 p.m. and on
Where: Transalta Arts Barns (10330 – 84 Avenue)

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Metro's 7th Heaven: Metro taps what's hot right now

1 Bruce Springsteen

As the new boss — Barack Obama, that is — settles down in his job, the real Boss returns to business with this presciently titled album, Working on a Dream. With the U.S. finally getting a little love from the rest of the world, Springsteen's majestic slice of Americana might just be the soundtrack to the renewed romance.



2 Amy Winehouse

Has she found a new love? Will hubby Blake Fielder-Civil dump her? Has she really cleaned up? Stack up the popcorn and stay tuned.

3 Slumdog Millionaire

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button might be the Oscar frontrunner, but Slumdog's still the popular puppy. This rags-to-riches tale will probably be the most fun you'll have at the theatres now.

4 Heineken

Women have the walk-in closet. And, now thanks to this Dutch commercial, men have the walk-in beer cooler. YouTube it and watch it yourself.

5 Honda Insight

This revamped hybrid was recently unveiled at the Detroit and Montreal auto shows. Claiming to be the cheapest of its kind, the Insight may just make green driving affordable for someone besides George Clooney.

6 Washington D.C.

Has the hub of world power ever looked this sexy? Granted, you may never catch a glimpse of the O-Man himself but with free entries to most major attractions, this city is the place to go.

7 Obama books:

- Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance, by Barack Obama
- Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope, by Nikki Grimes.

FRIDAY

| ED | C | B | S | 7:00 | 7:30 | 8:00 | 8:30 | 9:00 | 9:30 | 10:00 | 10:30 | 11:00 | |
|---------|---------------|-------|---------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1/23/09 | 2 | CFRN | 239 318 | etalk | Hollywood | Raising the Bar (N) | | Ghost Whisperer (N) | | Flashpoint (HDTV) (N) | | News (N) | |
| | 3 | KHQ | - 370 | News (N) | Be-Millionaire | Jeopardy! (N) | Wheel-Fortune | Howie Do It (N) Howie Do It (N) | | Friday Night Lights (N) | | Dateline NBC | |
| | 4 | CBXT | - 307 | Coronation St. | Jeopardy! (N) | Rick Mercer | Marketplace | Montreal Canadiens-100 Years | | CBC News: The National | | The Hour | |
| | 6 | KREM | - 372 | News (N) | Hollywood | The Doctors (N) | | Ghost Whisperer (N) | | Flashpoint (HDTV) (N) | | NUMB3RS | |
| | 7 | CKEM | 241 347 | Law & Order: SVU | | Man Tracker | | Survivorman | | Crusoe | | Your City | |
| | 8 | CITV | 240 339 | ET Canada | Entertainment | NUMB3RS (HDTV) (N) | | Howie Do It (N) Howie Do It (N) | | Friday Night Lights (N) | | News Hour | |
| | 12 | CBXFT | 119 705 | Du cœur au ventre (SC) | | Paquet voleur (HDTV) (SC) | | Une heure sur Terre (SC) | | Le Téléjournal et Les Nou | | TJ Alberta | |
| | 13 | KXLY | - 371 | 4 News at 6 | 4 News at 6:30 | Entertainment | The Insider (N) | | Wife Swap | | Supernanny (N) | | 20/20 |
| | 16 | KAYU | - 373 | The Simpsons | Raymond | Two/Half Men | Two/Half Men | Smarter Than a 5th Grader? | | Don't Forget the Lyrics! | | News (N) | |
| | 19 | CHTV | - | The Insider (N) | E News | Party Monsters: Cabo | | Smarter Than a 5th Grader? | | 20/20 (HDTV) | | News (N) | |
| news | 22 | KSPS | - 374 | NewsHour With Jim Lehrer | | Wash. Week | McLaughlin | Bill Moyers Journal (N) | | NOW on PBS Being Served | | Vicar of Dibley | |
| | 15 | CBCN | 502 | - | CBC News: The National | CBC News: the fifth estate | | CBC News: The National | | CBC News: The National | | fifth estate | |
| | 54 | CTVN | 501 391 | CTV Newsnet | | News | CTV Newsnet | News | CTV Newsnet | News | CTV Newsnet | News | |
| | 20 | TSN | 400 400 | (6:30) NBA Basketball | Toronto Raptors at Chicago Bulls. | | | SportsCentre | Tennis Australian | Open -- Early Round -- Day 6. (Live) | | | |
| | 23 | net | 408 418 | World Cup Skiing Alpine. | | FSN Pro Football Preview | | Hockey Central | Flames Week | Sportsnet Connected | | Ult. Fighter | |
| | 47 | SPEED | 417 406 | Barrett-Jackson | | NASCAR Racing Toyota All-Star Showdown -- Qualifying. (Live) | | | | | | SCCA Runoffs | |
| | 94 | SCORE | 410 403 | (6) WWE SmackDown! | | Score Tonight | | Hardcore Hockey Talk | | WWE SmackDown! | | | |
| | 14 | YTV | 552 543 | iCarly | Prank Patrol | Scorpion | Raise Your Voice ** (2004, Drama) | Hilary Duff, Oliver James. | | | | | Falcon Beach |
| | 17 | TREE | 553 546 | Little Bear | Miss Spider | Comfy Couch | Rolie Polie Olie | Max & Ruby | Dragon | Backyardigans | Dora-Explorer | Go, Diego, Go! | |
| | 45 | FAM | 557 541 | Zoe 101 | Latest Buzz | Wizards-Place | Camp Rock (2008, Musical Comedy) | | | | | | Jumanji ** (1995, Fantasy) |
| family | 25 | A&E | 615 520 | CSI: Miami (HDTV) | | The Beast (HDTV) | | Criminal Minds (HDTV) | | CSI: Miami (HDTV) | | CSI: Miami | |
| | 29 | FOOD | 603 561 | Kylie Kwong | Gourmets | Diner, Drive-In | Diner, Drive-In | Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares | | Challenge | | Kylie Kwong | |
| | 32 | DISC | 520 505 | Man vs. Wild "Sahara" | | Deranged Ted Bundy. (N) | | Daily Planet | | Man vs. Wild "Sahara" | | Project Earth | |
| | 38 | SPIKE | 628 584 | CSI: NY (HDTV) | | CSI: NY (HDTV) | | CSI: NY "On the Job" | | MANswers | | GameTrailers | |
| | 43 | SPACE | 627 528 | Supernatural (HDTV) | | Battlestar Galactica (N) | | Amityville II: The Possession ** (1982, Horror) | | | | Amityville 3-D | |
| | 50 | STAR | 621 56 | Popagenda | | The Tonight Show-Jay Leno | | TMZ | etalk | The View (HDTV) | | Popagenda | |
| | cable variety | 2 | CFRN | 239 318 | etalk | Hollywood | Raising the Bar (N) | | Ghost Whisperer (N) | | Flashpoint (HDTV) (N) | | News (N) |
| | | 3 | KHQ | - 370 | News (N) | Be-Millionaire | Jeopardy! (N) | Wheel-Fortune | Howie Do It (N) Howie Do It (N) | | Friday Night Lights (N) | | Dateline NBC |
| | | 4 | CBXT | - 307 | Coronation St. | Jeopardy! (N) | Rick Mercer | Marketplace | Montreal Canadiens-100 Years | | CBC News: The National | | The Hour |
| | | 6 | KREM | - 372 | News (N) | Hollywood | The Doctors (N) | | Ghost Whisperer (N) | | Flashpoint (HDTV) (N) | | NUMB3RS |
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Mendes is most desirable woman, says poll
Eva Mendes has been named the most desirable woman of 2009 by AskMen.com, femalefirst.co.uk reports. The Spirit actress topped a poll of men who were asked to name their ideal woman. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Celebrity Buzz

Police investigate extortion attempt

INVESTIGATION Police in the Bahamas have launched an investigation surrounding an attempt to extort money from John Travolta's family, Obie Wilchcombe, a member of the Bahamian Parliament, confirmed to Us-magazine.com.

The full details of the plot have not been released, but Us magazine quotes Wilchcombe as saying only one person — not two, which has been reported — is involved. A Bahamian newspaper, The Tribune, has suggested that the extortion attempt is connected to the recent loss of 16-year-old Jett Travolta, who died of a seizure disorder Jan. 2 at the family's vacation home in the Bahamas.

Wilchcombe denied reports that the person be-

hind the plot is a politician. "The lawyer who brought the situation to my attention is a politician," he clarifies.

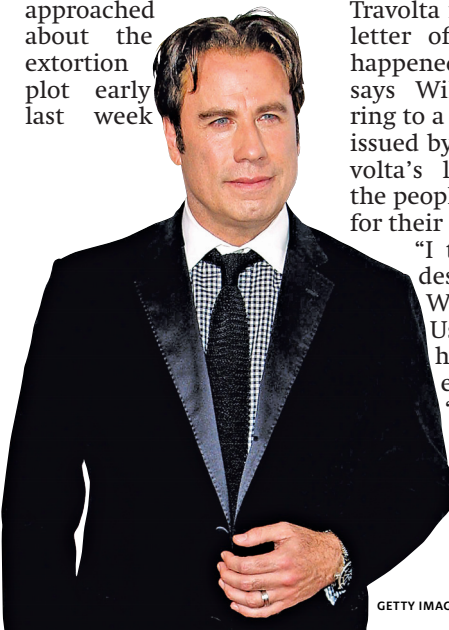
Wilchcombe says he was approached about the extortion plot early last week

and passed along the information to Travolta's lawyers, Michael Ossi and Michael McDermott, us-magazine.com adds.

"The irony was that the Travolta family just sent a letter of gratitude — it happened that afternoon," says Wilchcombe, referring to a Jan. 12 statement issued by McDermott, Travolta's lawyer, thanking the people of the Bahamas for their support.

"I thought it was a despicable act," Wilchcombe tells Us when he first heard news of the extortion plot. "One person should not destroy the character of the country."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

Depp's partner returns engagement ring

RELATIONSHIP Johnny Depp's long-term partner Vanessa Paradis has returned an engagement ring he bought her, people.com reports.

The Pirates of the Caribbean star was recently spotted shopping for the band in California, but Vanessa — who he has been with for 10 years — reportedly took it back as she was unhappy with the design.

A source said: "Johnny got Vanessa a drop-dead gorgeous engagement band but she returned it to the jeweller. She wants her ring to be absolutely perfect."

The couple

— who have two children, Lily-Rose, nine, and six-year-old Jack, together — are yet to officially announce they are planning to tie the knot, but are rumoured to be marrying in April.

The pair are keen to keep the ceremony as intimate as possible, and will only invite 50 of their closest friends and family to the service which

will be held in a chapel on the grounds of their \$1.25 million US French estate.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Kardashian happy about Razzie

CAREER For Kim Kardashian, it's great just to be nominated — even if it is for a Razzie, people.com reports.

"I'm having a really good laugh," the actress writes on her blog. "I had so much fun filming Disaster Movie and giggled the entire time during the shoot."

The reality star, 28, adds, "There is steep competition in my worst supporting actress category, I have to admit ... including my fantastic co-star Carmen Electra (you go girl!)." **METRO NEWS SERVICES**



METRO NEWS SERVICES

Aniston turning 40

PEOPLE Jennifer Aniston is planning a star-studded 40th birthday party, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The former Friends actress, who reaches the landmark age on Feb. 11, wants to celebrate early with a lavish bash at her new Beverly Hills home on Feb. 7.

The guest list will include Jennifer's boyfriend John Mayer, her close pal Courteney Cox and her husband David Arquette and singer Sheryl Crow.

It is believed the actress is

planning the early festivities because John wants to take her away for a romantic break for her actual birthday.

The pair will leave for their intimate getaway — which will also take in Valentine's Day — straight after the party.

Rumours are rife that John is set to propose on Jennifer's big day, and has splashed out on a custom-made engagement ring for her.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Perry takes vow of celibacy?

RUMOUR Katy Perry is taking a vow of celibacy, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The I Kissed a Girl singer has revealed she won't be smooching anyone this year, after splitting from frontman Travis McCoy.

When Grammy-nominated Katy, 24, was asked who she would like to kiss at the upcoming awards, she said: "I've actually taken a vow of celibacy this year ... no kissing anyone."

"Just my cat, Kitty Purry."

Katy and Travis' two-year romance is believed to have ended amid a flurry of arguments.

A source said: "It's sad, but they were fighting a lot in recent months because they never saw each other."

"When somebody becomes very famous very quickly their relationship usually suffers."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Oprah celebrates with Obamas

PEOPLE While she might not have hosted a fancy inauguration party herself, Oprah Winfrey did get to celebrate the occasion with Barack and Michelle Obama.

According to the Chicago Sun-Times, the new president and first lady capped off their big day just before 1 a.m. with a private champagne toast at the White House with a very select group of friends — including Winfrey, a vocal supporter of Obama throughout the campaign.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Federline packs on the pounds

HEALTH Kevin Federline appears to have packed on major pounds, usmagazine.com reports.

He showed off a fuller figure while golfing with a pal in Los Angeles Tuesday. His ex Shar Jackson explained to Us magazine last March that the 31-year-old rapper (who looked chunky last year) 31, had "daddy weight! When you are a full time parent, sometimes you can't focus on you."

Meanwhile, Federline's romance with volleyball player Victoria Prince, 26, seems to be heating up.

TMZ.com reports that she took Sean Preston, 3, and Jayden James, 2, out for dinner in Fresno, Calif., over the weekend.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Hudson set to be back in spotlight

CAREER After dropping out of the public eye following her family murder tragedy, Jennifer Hudson now has the strength and the will to give three high-profile performances next month, a source close to her tells People magazine.

"So much has happened, but she's ready," people.com quotes the source as saying. "It's a new year, she's excited about performing again. She knew it was time."

Hudson, 27, will deliver the National Anthem at the Super Bowl on Feb. 1.

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Today
Morning clouds.
-17 °C / -22 °C



Saturday
Afternoon clouds.
-16 °C / -23 °C



Sunday
Ice fog.
-14 °C / -23 °C



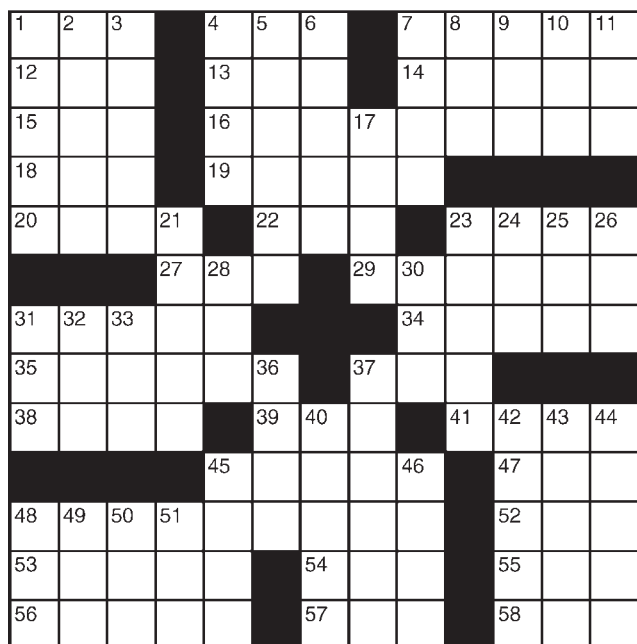
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"My favourite part is reporting the weather. It fascinates me, and as we know around here, it's always changing, keeping forecasters on their toes."

WEEKDAYS AT 6 AM

Take Five



Crossword across

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Hot tub | 34 Dastardly one |
| 4 Chances, for short | 35 Chat |
| 7 Blubbers | 37 Fool |
| 12 Dress (up) | 38 Authentic |
| 13 Dance flourish | 39 Every iota |
| 14 Say one's piece | 41 Drink too much |
| 15 Lord's Prayer start | 45 Thwart |
| 16 Noted newsweekly, with "The" | 47 Upper limit |
| 18 Lemieux milieu | 48 1969 Fellini movie |
| 19 Toaster's word | 52 Greek vowel |
| 20 Masticate | 53 Bewildered |
| 22 Screw up | 54 Rd. |
| 23 Test the waters | 55 Solidify |
| 27 Choose | 56 Energetic |
| 29 December stone | 57 Wrangler rival |
| 31 Point of view | 58 Skill |

Crossword down

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Unemotional | 28 Shell game item |
| 2 Joey's place? | 30 Conditions |
| 3 Match | 31 Performance |
| 4 Wordsworth works | 32 Neither mate |
| 5 Type of fence | 33 Wildebeest |
| 6 Animal track | 36 Indonesian island |
| 7 "Groovy" | 37 Niche |
| 8 Spinning meas. | 40 Lifelong resident |
| 9 Midafternoon, on a sundial | 42 Alpha's antithesis |
| 10 Em halves | 43 Dad, in Devonshire |
| 11 Collection | 44 Put on a pedestal |
| 17 Bygone game-show host Jack | 45 Talk like 37-Across? |
| 21 "The Right Stuff" author | 46 Banjo supporter |
| 23 Watch this space? | 48 Chucklehead |
| 24 Expert | 49 Foolhardiness |
| 25 "SNL" announcer Pardo | personified |
| 26 Remnant | 50 1/6 fl. oz. |
| | 51 "Uh-huh" |

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Y | A | O | A | G | E | S | F | L | A | P |
| E | M | U | N | I | C | E | L | I | N | E |
| S | I | T | T | I | G | H | T | A | M | E |
| R | U | M | O | U | R | T | O | W | N | |
| T | R | I | B | A | L | P | I | C | | |
| B | U | G | L | I | T | V | A | M | P | S |
| A | S | H | Y | P | O | I | R | I | O | T |
| R | E | T | I | E | O | L | D | D | N | A |
| I | C | E | D | T | E | A | A | L | I | |
| M | A | G | I | T | W | I | L | I | G | H |
| A | M | O | S | R | A | R | E | H | O | I |
| M | E | S | H | O | V | E | R | T | E | X |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| 8 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 3 |
| 6 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
| 2 | 5 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 6 |
| 3 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 7 |
| 9 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| 4 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 5 |
| 7 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 4 |

Find today's answers + play more games at metronews.ca

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:

Under 13 minGenius
13-17 min.....Scholar

17-21 minSmart
21-25 minNot bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day



Cornish Beef Pockets

PASTRY INGREDIENTS:

3 1/3 cups (825 ml) plain flour
Salt

1/2 lb (250 g) butter, chilled and diced

FILLING INGREDIENTS:

11 oz (350 g) lean chuck steak, diced

1 onion, chopped

1 potato, peeled and diced

6 oz (175 g), butternut squash, peeled and diced

1 1/2 tbsp (20 ml) beef stock

2 tbsp (25 ml) chopped fresh parsley

Salt and pepper

Beaten egg, to brush

1 garlic clove, chopped

3/4 in. (2 cm) piece fresh ginger, peeled and

chopped

1 red chili pepper, seeded and chopped

METHOD:

1. Pastry: Sift flour and pinch of salt into large bowl. Rub in butter with

fingertips until mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Sprinkle 6 tbsp (90 ml)

chilled water over mixture, then mix in. If

dough seems dry, add more water. Gather dough

then lightly knead until

smooth. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate 20 minutes before using.

2. Filling: Put steak, onion, potato, squash, stock and parsley in bowl. Season with salt and pepper and mix well.

3. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C). Divide pastry into eight pieces. Roll out each to an 8-in. (20-cm) round.

4. Spoon equal amounts of filling onto centre of each pastry round. Brush edges with egg, then bring together at top. Press edges firmly together to seal, then crimp.

5. Place pockets on two non-stick baking trays. Brush with beaten egg. Make small holes in tops to let steam out.

6. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 325 F (160 C); cook 45 minutes to 1 hour, until pastry is golden and filling is cooked. Serve hot, warm or cold.

SERVES 8

rd.ca

For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!



Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 20



You'll disagree with a practical person. Problems may thwart your plan to meet someone. Don't insist on talking about flirtations.

LIBRA

SEPT 23-OCT 23



You'll advise someone to avoid taking risks. Find the strength to speak out about respect. Quiet moments will ease your weary spirit.

TAURUS

APRIL 21-MAY 21



Laughing is better than arguing with a misery-guts. Try to understand that a woman is tempted. Have fun with an old friend.

SCORPIO

OCT 24-NOV 22



Your nurturing strengthens a weak man. Your daily life is being challenged by a stupid mistake. There'll be no secret messages.

GEMINI

MAY 22-JUNE 21



A non-stop talker will stand up for you. Nobody can diminish your high spirits. Change your routines to avoid seeing a jerk.

SAGITTARIUS

NOV 23-DEC 21



A breathtaking adventure will change your outlook. End an awkward situation immediately. You can have a good impact on an idiot.

CANCER

JUNE 22-JULY 22



Take a thrilling new direction after a phone call. Water problems can cause distress. Don't be hoodwinked by momentary rewards.

CAPRICORN

DEC 22-JAN 20



You can be certain of a chance for glory. An interesting story will explain poor behaviour. You'll struggle to strengthen an emotional bond.

LEO

JULY 23-AUG 23



People will be riled up by unreliable gossip. Be careful what you put in e-mails. Exhaustion has unforeseen consequences.

AQUARIUS

JAN 21-FEB 18



Don't lose sleep over a minor problem. You have the courage to do fascinating things. Take other people's wickedness into account.

VIRGO

AUG 24-SEPT 22



A flirtation will result from a strong emotional connection. Your heart's desire can be fulfilled. Dreadful behaviour will cause you to feel insecure.

PISCES

FEB 19-MARCH 20



A friend's defiance will result in more respect. Don't take chances with your health. An elder is suffering from embarrassment.

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